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Sugar Cost 35 Cents a Pound During
Civil War—Refiners' Profits
Now Curtailed.

Sugar is selling today throughout America at from 8½ to 9 cents a pound to the consumer, even though there is a world shortage which has reduced this nation's sugar allotment to 70 per cent. of normal.

Through the efforts of the United States food administration the sugar market has been regulated as far as the producer, refiner and wholesaler is concerned. The food administration has no power to regulate retail prices except by public opinion. Even though more than 85,000 tons of sugar have been shipped to France in the last four months the retail grocer's sugar price is around 8 to 8½ cents. He should sell this sugar at 8½ to 9 cents, the food administration believes, and asks the American housewife to pay no more than this amount.

Last August when the food administration was organized the price of sugar rose suddenly to 11 cents a pound. During the Civil War sugar cost the consumer 35 cents a pound. By regulation of the sugar market and reducing the price to 8½ and 9 cents and keeping it from advancing to 20 cents the food administration has saved the American public at least \$180,000,000 in four months, according to a statement made by Herbert Hoover the other day.

"It is our stern duty to feed the allies, to maintain their health and strength at any cost to ourselves," Mr. Hoover declared. "There has not been, nor will be as we see it, enough sugar for even their present meagre and depressing ration unless they send ships to remote markets for it. If we in our greed and gluttony force them either to further reduce their ration or to send these ships we will have done damage to our abilities to win this war."

"If we send the ships to Java for 250,000 tons of sugar next year we will have necessitated the employment of eleven extra ships for one year. These ships—if used in transporting troops—would take 150,000 to 200,000 men to France."

Reason for World Shortage.
As Mr. Hoover pointed out, the United States, Canada and England were sugar importing countries before the war, while France and Italy were very nearly self supporting. The main sources of the world's sugar supply was Germany and neighboring powers, the West Indies and the East Indies. German sugar is no longer available, as it is used entirely in Germany, which also absorbs sugar of surrounding countries.

England can no longer buy 1,400,000 long tons of sugar each year from Germany. The French sugar production has dropped from 750,000 to 210,000 tons. The Italian production has fallen from 210,000 tons to 75,000 tons. Thus three countries were thrown upon East and West Indian sources for 1,925,000 tons annually to maintain their normal consumption.

Because of the world's shipping shortage the allied nations started drawing on the West Indies for sugar; East Indian sugar took three times the number of ships, since the distance was three times as great. Suddenly the west was called on to furnish and did furnish 1,420,000 tons of sugar to Europe when 300,000 tons a year was the pre-war demand. The allies had drawn from Java 400,000 tons before the shipping situation became acute.

"In spite of these shipments," Mr. Hoover stated the other day, "the English government in August reduced the household sugar ration to a basis of 24 pounds per annum per capita. And in September the French government reduced their household ration to 13 2-10 pounds a year, or a bit over 1 pound of sugar a month. Even this meagre ration could not be filled by the French government. It was found early in the fall. America was then asked for 100,000 tons of sugar and succeeded in sending 85,000 tons by December 1. The French request was granted because the American household consumption was then at least 55 pounds per person, and it was considered the duty of maintaining the French morale made our course clear."

Today the sugar situation may be summarized by stating that if America will reduce its sugar consumption 10 to 15 per cent, this nation will be able to send 200,000 more soldiers to France.

Sugar today sells at seaboard refineries at \$7.25 a hundred pounds. The wholesale grocer has agreed to limit his profit to 25 cents a hundred plus freight, and the retail grocer is supposed to take no more than 50 cents a hundred pounds profit. This regulation was made by the food administration, which now asks the housewife to reduce sugar consumption as much as possible, using other sweeteners, and also reminds her that she should pay no more than 9 cents a pound for sugar.

Control of Cane Refiners' Profits.
"Immediately upon the establishment of the food administration," Mr.

Hoover said, "an examination was made of the costs and profits of refining and it was finally determined that the spread between the cost of raw and the sale of refined cane sugar should be limited to \$1.30 per hundred pounds. The pre-war differential had averaged about 85 cents and increased costs were found to have been imposed by the war in increased cost of refining, losses, cost of bags, labor, insurance, interest and other things, rather more than cover the difference. After prolonged negotiations the refiners were placed under agreement establishing these limits on October 1, and anything over this amount to be agreed extortionate under the law."

"In the course of these investigations it was found by canvass of the Cuban producers that their sugar had, during the first nine months of the past year, sold for an average of about \$4.24 per hundred f. o. b. Cuba, to which duty and freight added to the refiners' cost amount to about \$5.66 per hundred. The average sale price of granulated by various refineries, according to our investigation, was about \$7.50 per hundred, or a differential of \$1.84."

"In reducing the differential to \$1.30 there was a saving to the public of 54 cents per hundred. Had such a differential been in use from the 1st of January, 1917, the public would have saved in the first nine months of the year about \$24,800,000."

Next Year.

With a view to more efficient organization of the trade in imported sugars next year two committees have been formed by the food administration:

1. A committee comprising representatives of all of the elements of American cane refining groups. The principal duty of this committee is to divide the sugar imports pro rata to their various capacities and see that absolute justice is done to every refiner.

2. A committee comprising three representatives of the English, French and Italian governments; two representatives of the American refiners, with a member of the food administration. Only two of the committee have arrived from Europe, but they represent the allied governments. The duties of this committee are to determine the most economical sources from a transport point of view of all the allies to arrange transport at uniform rates, to distribute the foreign sugar between the United States and allies, subject to the approval of the American, English, French and Italian governments.

This committee, while holding strong views as to the price to be paid for Cuban sugar, has not had the final voice. This voice has rested in the governments concerned, together with the Cuban government, and I wish to state emphatically that all of the gentlemen concerned as good commercial men have endeavored with the utmost patience and skill to secure a lower price, and their persistence has reduced Cuban demands by 15 cents per hundred. The price agreed upon is about \$4.60 per hundred pounds, f. o. b. Cuba, or equal to about \$6 duty paid New York.

"This price should eventuate," Mr. Hoover said, "to about \$7.30 per hundred for refined sugar from the refiners at seaboard points or should place sugar in the hands of the consumer at from 8½ to 9 cents per pound, depending upon locality and conditions of trade, or at from 1 to 2 cents below the prices of August last and from one-half to a cent per pound cheaper than today."

"There is now an elimination of speculation, extortionate profits, and in the refining alone the American people will save over \$25,000,000 of the refining charges last year. A part of these savings goes to the Cuban, Hawaiian, Porto Rican and Louisiana producer and part to the consumer."

"Appeals to prejudice against the food administration have been made because the Cuban price is 34 cents above that of 1917. It is said in effect that the Cubans are at our mercy; that we could get sugar a cent lower. We made exhaustive study of the cost of producing sugar in Cuba last year through our own agents in Cuba, and we find it averages \$3.39, while many producers are at a higher level. We found that an average profit of at least a cent per pound was necessary in order to maintain and stimulate production or that a minimum price of \$4.37 was necessary, and even this would stifle some producers."

"The price ultimately agreed was 23 cents above these figures, or about one-fifth of a cent per pound to the American consumer, and more than this amount has been saved by our reduction in refiners' profits. If we wish to stifle production in Cuba we could take that course just at the time of all times in our history when we want production for ourselves and the allies. Further than that, the state department will assure you that such a course would produce disturbances in Cuba and destroy even our present supplies, but beyond all these material reasons is one of human justice. This great country has no right by the might of its position to strangle Cuba."

"Therefore there is no imposition upon the American public. Charges have been made before this committee that Mr. Rolph endeavored to benefit the California refinery of which he was manager by this 34 cent increase in Cuban price. Mr. Rolph did not fix the price. It does raise the price to the Hawaiian farmer about that amount. It does not raise the profit of the California refinery, because their charge for refining is, like all other refiners, limited to \$1.30 per hundred pounds, plus the freight differential on the established custom of the trade."

"Mr. Rolph has not one penny of interest in that refinery."

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